

296

Starting To-day—TOPICAL BIGGLES AIR-WAR STORY!

# MODERN BOY

No. 49

EVERY SATURDAY

January 21st, 1939

2<sup>D</sup>



BIGGLES GOES INTO ACTION—EXCITING MOMENT FROM FLYING-OFFICER JOHNS' NEW THRILLER—

WINGS OVER SPAIN!



# The CHEST of TERROR

King of the Islands in an Eerie South Seas Adventure

One Cry—Then—

**M**OON and stars glimmered on the Pacific Ocean. It was a calm and peaceful night, visibility good, and the ketch Dawn was bowling along before a six-knot breeze.

King of the Islands, the ketch's young skipper and owner, could have wished for nothing better—but for the disastrous state of affairs aboard his ship.

The native crew had got it into their heads that there was a "debble" aboard, hidden in a large chest consigned to the island of Suta. Superstitious terror had driven them to mutiny—to attempt to seize the whaleboat and escape from the ship. The attempt had failed, but both Ken King and his mate, Kit Hudson, were uneasy and wary. They had their revolvers handy, and dreaded every moment that they would have to use them.

Koko, the bo'sun, was at the wheel—silent, almost morose. The crew—Tomoo, Lufu, Kolulo, and Lompo—were forward, sometimes whispering, more often silent, with rolling eyes gleaming in the dusk. If an order was given they obeyed slowly, sullenly. They saw a lurking devil in every shadow.

Koko looked like a man expecting death—as, indeed, he did. Doom was written on every other face. Their white master was driving them on a course to certain destruction—that was the fixed belief of every Kanaka on board. Koko, loyal to the very death, was ready to die if his white master so willed it. But the crew were liable to panic at any moment.

"Danny!" shouted Ken. It was the fifth or sixth time he had called, but from the cooky-boy, trembling in his galley, came no answer.

Danny had struck work, and the white masters, as well as the crew, were left without rations.

"Go down and scrounge something, Kit," he said, at last. "No good sending a boy—even Koko."

"Me go along cabin, sar, s'pose you say," muttered Koko. "This feller 'bey little white master, go finish along debble."

"You stop along wheel, Koko," said Ken. "You plenty too much big feller fool, tinkee debble he stop along chest."

It was an utter mystery to Ken why the Kanakas had picked on the teak chest as the object of their terror. Danny had fancied that he had heard the evil spirit cry out from that chest. He might as well have fancied that an unearthly cry came from any other box or case, so far as Ken could see. He didn't know that Danny's probing knife had brought forth that cry!

As Hudson walked to the companion, Koko exclaimed:

"Oh, sar, you no makee feller Hudson go along cabin, sar. That feller go finish, along he go along cabin, along debble he stop."

Hudson, as he heard the words, chuckled. "S'pose me findee debble along cabin, Koko, me bring that feller debble along deck, hand belong me along ear belong that debble!" he said. And, laughing, went down.

Koko listened to his footsteps with straining ears, and the whole crew moved a little aft, with heads bent, to listen, too. In the gleam of the moon and the stars every brown face was tense and drawn, breath coming thick and fast.

Every brown boy on the Dawn believed that Kit Hudson had gone down to his death. They listened, their hearts hardly beating under the tense strain for the last cry of the reckless mate.

In spite of himself, the horror that lay like ice on the crew affected Ken, and he felt his heart give a quicker beat. Under the deck

## By CHARLES HAMILTON

he heard Hudson's tramping steps. They stopped suddenly. What was it that followed? Was that the sound of a sharp, startled cry—a scuffling struggle, a fall? Was it, or was he dreaming? From the Kanakas came a moaning breath of horror. King of the Islands stood petrified for a second, then he leaped to the companion.

"Kit!" he shouted. There came no answer from the mate of the Dawn.

In the moon-gleam the eyes of the terrified Kanakas rolled wildly. They had expected this. They had listened for Hudson's last cry, and they had heard it. If any brown boy on the Dawn had doubted the existence of that malevolent spirit before, he could not have doubted now.

Ken breathed hard. Something had happened to Hudson, or he would have answered. What, was beyond his guessing. He knew what might happen if he left the deck. His presence barely restrained the Kanakas from seizing on the whaleboat and fleeing from the ship. Yet he had to go below to see what had chanced. Once again he shouted.

"Kit! Kit Hudson! Answer me, shipmate!"

The boy trader whipped out his revolver.

"Koko, Makee feller rope stop along wheel. You stand by feller boat. You kill too much any feller boy makee go along boat. You feller boy, you stand back, along forecandle!" His brandished revolver drove the Kanakas forward. Koko secured the wheel and stepped towards the whaleboat. He was shaking from head to foot.

"Oh, sar, you no go along cabin!" he panted. "Feller Hudson dead feller. S'pose you go along cabin, you dead feller, all samee feller Hudson."

"Fool!" snapped Ken, and taking the lantern that hung from the mizzen, he went below into the darkness.

Ken flashed the lantern round him as he stepped out of the companion. The light revealed the cabin, with the lockers port and starboard, the state-room at one end, and the open doorway of the lazarette at the other. Beside the lazarette doorway stood the long teak chest in which Danny had heard the debble.

Where was Hudson? Ken saw him the next moment. The mate lay stretched on the cabin floor, still as one dead, beside the clamped table, over which swung the lamp. A matchbox and several scattered matches lay beside him.

Ken flashed the light round again. The cabin was empty, save for himself and his mate.

He grasped Hudson, and turned his face to the light. There was blood on it—blood that ran in a trickle from under his dark hair.

What hand had struck down the mate of the Dawn? King of the Islands, amazed, cast a glance round him into empty, silent shadows. In spite of himself, a thrill ran through him—a superstitious thrill. How could an earthly hand have struck Hudson down, when every man on the ketch had been on deck?

But quickly the boy trader pulled himself together. He grasped his shipmate, raised him, and tramped up the companion ladder.

There was a scuffling on deck, a howling of wild and angry voices. He knew what that meant. The crew were seeking to seize the boat, and Koko was fending them off.

Ken staggered out on deck and laid Hudson down by the binnacle. Koko was struggling in the grasp of the whole crew, and even his mighty strength was not equal to such a test. Ken snatched a belaying-pin from the rail, and rushed at the panting, scuffling, struggling mob even as Koko was borne down, crashing, on the deck.

It was no moment for standing on ceremony—he crashed the belaying-pin right and left, on fuzzy head after head, yells and howls ringing out as the blows crashed.

It seemed for some moments as if the crew would turn like tigers on their skipper, so mad and frantic was their terror. But they backed, howling and panting, and Koko staggered to his feet and helped drive them into the forecandle. Then Ken ran back along the deck, and dropped on his knees beside his unconscious shipmate.

## By Whose Hand?

**H**UDSON'S eyes opened dizzily. He stared up at his shipmate, his face white and ghastly, in the gleam of the moon. As he stirred, he gave a groan of pain, and his hand went to

his head. His hair was wet—Ken was bathing the bruise and the cut under his thick hair. Hudson had had a heavy blow; there was a great bruise, and a cut from which the blood oozed; Ken would have said that he had gone down under the crashing butt of a pistol. But what hand, on the Dawn, could have wielded the weapon?

"Ken"—Hudson's voice came broken—"did you get him?"

"Him! Who, old chap?"

"I don't know! He got me in the cabin. Did you see him? Somebody—or something—in the dark!" Hudson pressed his hand to his head. "You've seen nobody?"

"Nobody!"

"He got me!" Hudson was still dazed. "I was in the dark—I'd got out my matches to light the lamp—I knocked against him—something—in the dark—scuffled for a second—and then—"

Hudson lay silent, his aching head pillowed on his shipmate's knee. But he was pulling round. He had had a hard knock, but his strength was coming back. He stirred, and Ken helped him to his feet. He dropped into a madiera chair by the taffrail, his eyes on the companion—open, looming shadowy. Below, there was a glimmer of light from the lantern Ken had left burning there.

There was a mutter from the shadows on the deck. All the crew were watching Kit Hudson. He was alive, but his ghastly face, with the dabble of blood on it, told what he had been through down there in the dark. No one but Hudson had been below when the blow was struck. It was proof positive to the Kanakas, if they needed it. To their simple minds, it seemed that even the white men now must believe and acknowledge that the Dawn was haunted.

Koko's voice broke the silence, almost whispering:

"You savvy now that debble he stop—debble along cabin kill feller Hudson, along dark. You see, sar, eye belong you, feller Hudson kill along that feller debble. All us feller go finish, sar, along we stop along this ship! Makee lower whaleboat, sar, or we go finish altogether!"

Ken did not heed him.

"Kit, old man! There's only one way to account for this—there's a man on the ship we knew nothing of! Some swab stowed away before we left Lukwe!"



Hudson nodded slowly.

"And I fancy I can guess who it is, too," went on King of the Islands. "If I find a man hidden on this packet, it's a ship's cargo to a fathom of shell-money that his name is Peter Parsons!"

"Sure thing!" agreed Hudson. "I wondered that we got away from Lukve without trouble with him. Dandy Peter isn't the man to take a defeat sitting down. It's Dandy Peter or the devil!"

"Him-debble, sar!" said Koko. "Me savvy too much! All Kanaka feller savvy. White master no savvy samee Kanaka feller!"

There was a murmur from the crew. Only too well they knew that obstinate white masters did not "savvy" debbles. In the matter of evil-working spirits, the native boys had a much more extensive knowledge than the white masters!

"Oh, sar!" said Danny. "Me savvy too much that feller debble stop along this ship, along me hear him cry out, sar, ear belong me. You no findee feller stowaway along this ship, sar."

"Rot!" exclaimed Ken, and stepped into the companion.

Koko's terror of the unseen was overpowering. But he forced himself to follow the boy skipper of the Dawn.

The crew exchanged quick glances. Kit Hudson, a grim look on his pale face, drew his revolver. His look told his intention without words. He was going to fire on the crew if they tried to rush the boat, and the Hiva-Oa boys hung back.

King of the Islands stepped into the cabin. The lantern that he had left when he carried Hudson senseless to the deck was still burning. He lighted the cabin lamp, then picked up the lantern in his left hand, keeping the revolver in his right. What had happened to Hudson showed only too well that he might need his weapon when he found the hidden man.

Koko's eyes were fixed on the teak chest. Ken did not glance at it. He went first into the state-room, but a glance showed that no one was there. They moved along the cabin to the lazarette. He flashed the light round on packed cargo, but it was plain that no one was hidden in the lazarette, and he stepped to the trapdoor in the floor that gave access to the hold below, where the water-casks were stored.

Koko gave a gasping cry as Ken lifted the flap and flashed the light of the lantern into the dark depths. With lagging steps, the bo'sun followed his white master into the lazarette.

"Debble him stop in dark, sar!" groaned Koko. "Debble him no likee light, him stop along dark."

Unheeding, Ken stepped on the ladder that led below. He descended, flashing the light before him. That was the hiding-place of the secret enemy he could not doubt, for there was no other possible hide-out on the ketch. He was quite assured that, lurking in the darkness, he would root out the man who had struck down his mate.

Koko, from the trap, watched the light twinkling below. Every second he expected to hear the cry of his white master in the clutch of the haunting, evil spirit. He waited and watched, his heart almost dying within him.

But all he heard was the sound of the boy trader searching. He could scarcely believe his eyes when at length Ken came back to the ladder.

Ken's face was angry and perplexed. No evil spirit had troubled him in his search; but he had not, as he had fully and confidently expected, found a hidden stowaway. Every recess that could have hidden a rabbit he had searched. His lips were set as he came up the ladder.

"No feller stop, sar!" breathed Koko.

"No!" said Ken.

"You believe now, sar, along feller debble?"

King of the Islands did not answer that. He did not know what to think, or what to believe. Some unseen hand had struck down Kit Hudson, and his search had proved that there was no stranger on the Dawn. It was utterly unexpected, but there



Dandy Peter whipped out his revolver, but he had no chance to use it—Ken was on him like a shot.

it was, and for the time being he had to make the best of it.

## The Moving Shadow

**K**IT HUDSON fixed his eyes on his shipmate's face as it emerged, frowning and perplexed, into the bright light of the moon. The crew watched him, surprised to see him return in safety, surprised to see Koko follow him up still alive; but aware, from the fact that he returned only with the bo'sun, that he had found no stranger on board the ketch. They had not believed, like the white men, that the explanation was that there was a hidden man on the Dawn. And now it seemed to them that even the obstinate white masters must face the facts.

"I've searched every foot, Kit—every inch almost. There's not a corner where a spider could hide that I haven't looked into," said Ken in a low voice. "There's no man hidden on this packet, Kit."

The shipmates exchanged hopeless looks. Common sense had driven the shipmates to the conclusion that there was an unknown man on the ketch, and they had suspected that it was their old enemy, Dandy Peter of Lukve. Yet there was no stranger on the ketch—so far as could be discovered. And every possible or impossible place of concealment had been searched.

"It's almost enough to make a man believe in ghosts, Kit, like the Kanakas!" said Ken, breaking a long silence.

"That's rot!" said Hudson. "But—"

"But who struck you down, Kit? I reckoned that it was a hidden man. Could he have slipped overboard before I went down for you?"

"Fifty miles from land, Ken!" Hudson shook his head. "It's got me beat!"

"And me!" muttered King of the Islands.

He moved to and fro restlessly, while Hudson sat in hopeless puzzlement. Now and again he glanced into the companion, where the light from the cabin lamp glimmered at the foot of the steps.

Suddenly he came to a dead stop, staring into the companion with startling, unbelieving eyes. A shadow had passed suddenly across that glimmer of light—the shadow of a figure that moved in the cabin unseen!

Ken felt the blood thrill in his veins, and a creeping in his scalp, as if his hair was standing on end. He knew that his face had whitened.

"Ken!" Hudson stared across at him. "What—"

Ken looked round.

"Unless I'm going mad, I saw a shadow pass the cabin light—there's someone below!"

"But you've searched—"

"Every inch!" said Ken hoarsely. "But I tell you I saw a shadow pass the light at the foot of the steps!"

"You're dreaming, Ken! We shall both be fancying things soon at this rate!" muttered Hudson. "It's impossible—"

"I tell you I saw it!" King of the Islands shut his teeth, gripping his revolver hard. "I'm going down! Man or devil, I'll root him out!"

As he went down the companion the light below suddenly disappeared.

A moment more, and Ken was in the cabin in the dark. The lurking enemy who had struck his mate down was there—human or inhuman, it was there! The boy trader fired twice.

The reports of the revolver roared like thunder through the silent ship. It seemed to Ken that he heard a sound—as if a gasping breath.

Before he could fire again his arm was gripped and forced up, and the next second he was grappling with an unseen enemy.



## THE CHEST OF TERROR

A shudder of horror ran through him as invisible hands in the blackness gripped him.

He staggered and reeled. Then, wrenching loose his right arm he struck blindly with the pistol-barrel. It met something solid, and he heard a hissing cry. A blow grazed his shoulder the next moment. He struck again, but the pistol-barrel swept only the empty air. His unseen assailant had suddenly released him and leaped away.

He staggered, panting for breath. His quick ear picked up a sound in the direction of the lazarette. He fired instantly.

He heard the crash of the bullet in the lazarette. He fired again and again, emptying his revolver in the darkness.

A lantern gleamed in the companion. Kit Hudson was descending. A few moments, and he was in the cabin, flashing the lantern-light round. His revolver was ready, if he had seen an enemy. But there was no enemy to be seen. The shipmates were alone in the cabin.

Ken rushed into the lazarette. He knew—he could not doubt—that it was in that direction that the unseen enemy had fled. Hudson was at his heels. But they stared round the lazarette in vain. No one was there. Ken made a step towards the trap in the floor, but he checked himself. He had searched down to the orlop-deck once. What was the use of searching again?

"Kit!" The boy trader's voice was low and husky. "Kit, are the Kanakas right? Is this ship haunted?"

"Heaven knows!" muttered Hudson.

"He had me—in the dark; came near to knocking me out, as he knocked you out!"

There was a sound of scuffling on deck. Ken knew what that meant. With both the white men below, the crew had made a rush for the boat. Ken and Kit were quickly on the scene, and the Hiva-Oa boys retreated forward again. But there was panic on the Dawn now, and the shipmates, though they still had the upper hand, wondered how that wild night was to end.

## Danny Speaks Out

"THEY'RE coming!" muttered Hudson.  
Ken King nodded, and set his lips hard.

Koko, with a capstan-bar in his brown hand, silently joined up with the white masters. But the five Hiva-Oa boys, as they came slowly aft bunched together, looked fiercely determined. They were a loyal crew, and in other circumstances would never have dreamed of lifting a hand against the white masters. But panic reigned now, over-mastering fear of the unseen and the unknown. The shipmates could hardly blame them when they themselves could not explain the strange happenings on the Dawn.

The crew came to a halt, and Tomoo, after a glance round at the brown faces of his comrades, spoke:

"Us feller savvy too much, sir; debble stop along this ship! All feller along this ship go finish, close up. Debble stop along chest belong Lukwe. White master put that feller chest along sea; debble he go along sea. White master he say no. Us feller no stop! S'posee you shootee along gun, this feller boy go finish along gun; all samee, go finish along debble! Us feller go along sea along boat! You no makee this feller stop!"

And the crew growled assent, their dark eyes rolling and gleaming in the moonlight.

"Oh, sar, you put that feller chest along sea!" squeaked Danny. "Debble stop along that feller chest, sar! Me savvy too much."

"S'pose debble no stop, what feller stop along dark, along you savvy, sar?" demanded Tomoo.

King of the Islands could not answer that question. He made a gesture with his revolver. But the weapon no longer daunted the Hiva-Oa boys. They had made up their minds that they might as well "go finish" one way as another, and it was death to linger on the ship haunted by the powers of evil and darkness.

"Debble stop, sar!" said Kolulo. "You

savvy too much debble no stop. He stop along chest along cabin! Koko savvy!" He glanced at the boatswain. "That feller hear debble, ear belong him, all samee Danny! You makee that feller chest go along sea, us feller stop; you no makee, us feller go along whaleboat along sea! No care along you shootee along gun, sar!"

Ken breathed hard.  
"You feller boy talk fool talk!" he said. "S'posee that feller chest belong me, me makee go along sea too quick, along you flaid along that feller chest. That feller chest belong along Mr. Harvey, along Lukwe. What you tinkee me say along Mr. Harvey, s'posee he savvy chest belong him go along sea?"

"That feller chest no belong Mr. Harvey, sar," said Danny. "That feller chest belong along Cap'n Parsons, sar."

Ken stared at the cooky-boy.

"Tinkee brain belong you no walk about any more, you feller Danny," he answered. "That feller chest belong along Mr. Harvey, him sendee along Mr. Milsom along Suta."

"You no savvy, sar! This feller Danny savvy!" exclaimed the cooky-boy. "Oh, sar, s'posee you savvy that feller chest belong Peter Parsons, sar, you makee go along sea!"

"Is the boy mad?" asked Hudson, staring. "Does he fancy we'd take any cargo on board from Parsons?"

Ken gave an angry laugh. He would not have been likely to have any dealings of any kind with Dandy Peter Parsons, keen as he had been on picking up cargo at Lukwe. It was Harvey, the Lukwe trader, who had consigned the chest of sandalwood carvings to Suta, as all the crew knew. But Danny, wildly excited, pushed forward.

"Me savvy, sar!" he squeaked. "Oh, sar, me savvy too much! You tinkee feller chest belong Mr. Harvey, sar! Me savvy him no belong Mr. Harvey; him belong Cap'n Parsons, sar! This feller Danny savvy!"

"What name you tinkee feller chest belong Cap'n Parsons?" demanded King of the Islands.

"Me savvy, sar! Along bush, along Lukwe, me hear Cap'n Parsons talk along Mr. Harvey, sar!" howled Danny. "Me hear um, sar, ear belong me! Cap'n Parsons, he say, wantee send feller chest along Suta, sar, tinkee you no takee, s'posee you savvy he belong Cap'n Parsons, sar! Him askee Mr. Harvey sendee, all samee he belong Mr. Harvey; him belong Cap'n Parsons altogether too much, sar!"

"Me savvy too much, sar!" he went on. "You tinkee feller chest belong Mister Harvey! Me savvy him belong Peter Parsons, sar. Now you savvy him belong Cap'n Parsons, sar, you makee that feller chest go along sea, along takee debble along sea."

The Hiva-Oa boys looked hopefully at their white master. There was a general relaxing of tension. Now that the white master knew that the mysterious chest belonged to his old enemy who had tricked him into taking it on board the Dawn, surely he would consent to pitch it over the side, and relieve the ketch of the haunting debble!

But other thoughts were in Ken's mind. Danny had revealed more than he realised—he had, quite unconsciously, given King of the Islands the clue to the mystery of the Dawn!

Ken King looked at his shipmate. Hudson nodded. Now that they knew that the teak chest belonged to Dandy Peter Parsons, they could guess exactly the nature of the debble that "stopped" along that teak chest!

"Dandy Peter!" breathed Hudson.

"Ay, ay!" said King of the Islands between his teeth. "Dandy Peter! If that fool Danny had spoken before." He clenched his hands.

"Harvey never knew, of course! Parsons made use of him—all he knew was that Parsons had a consignment of sandalwood to send to Suta, and wanted it to go in the first craft that made Suta—and couldn't ask us to take it, as we would do no trade with him. All Harvey knew was that Parsons was making use of us to get his consignment to Suta." He turned to the crew.

"You feller boy!" he rapped. "You go along cabin, along bring that feller chest along deck."

The Hiva-Oa boys did not stir. This meant,

to them, that their wish was to be granted, and that the dreaded chest, with the spirit that had made it his den, was to be thrown over the side. But eager as they were to see the last of the chest, they hesitated to go below for it.

Ken burst into a laugh.  
"S'pose you too much fright, white master go," he said. "You feller Koko, you come along white master."

## The "Debble" Emerges

**K**ING OF THE ISLANDS descended the companion—revolver in hand. Twice, as he knew now, the debble had been out of the chest, and he was wary. Koko followed him with the lantern. But the cabin was quiet and unattended. Ken relighted the swinging lamp, and stepped towards the chest. He scanned it curiously, Koko watching him in deep alarm. As the debble was not in evidence, Koko had no doubt that it had gone back to its den in the mysterious chest—as, indeed, Ken had no doubt either that it had.

"You takee that end, Koko, hand belong you!" he directed.

"Yessar!" mumbled Koko.  
Only with a great effort did the boatswain force himself to touch the devil-haunted chest. But he grasped it, at his master's order, and Ken lifted the other end. Strong as he was, he almost staggered under the weight. But between them, the chest was carried to the companion, and step by step borne up to the deck.

Ken stooped, and put his mouth to the end of the chest where Danny's knife had gashed, enlarging one of the breathing holes. The Kanakas watched him in wonder and terror.

The reckless white man evidently was going to speak to the debble in the chest.

"Dandy Peter!" said King of the Islands in a clear voice. "You're found out! Will you unlock the chest, or shall I order my crew to slip it over the side?"

There was no sound from the chest.

Ken's eyes glinted.  
"You feller boy, you takee this chest, along you put it along sea!" he called out.

There was a click. The Hiva-Oa boys gave a startled howl as the long, heavy lid of the chest was thrown up from within. The debble was about to emerge—and they gazed with starting eyes in frozen, horrified expectation of seeing some dreadful shape.

But it was a slim, dapper figure that leaped up from the interior of the chest—the figure of Dandy Peter Parsons, and the crew gave a howl of amazement as they saw him. Dandy Peter's face was distorted with rage. There was a revolver in his hand, but he had no chance to use it. Ken King's grasp was on him in the instant, the revolver was wrenched away, and the sea-lawyer, spitting out curses, was flung headlong to the deck.

"Feller Parsons!" stuttered Koko.

"Feller Parsons!" babbled the crew.

"No feller debble—feller Parsons belong Lukwe!" gasped Danny. "Feller Parsons stop along chest belong him."

Dandy Peter staggered to his feet. His handsome, reckless face was white with fury, for he had never dreamed that his trickery would be discovered. Neither would it have been, had not the cooky-boy overheard his talk with Harvey, in the bush at Lukwe, and, knowing the chest to belong to Dandy Peter, meddled with it to damage the contents, in revenge for the kicking Parsons had given him. The cooky-boy's knife had pierced Dandy Peter's foot, causing him to utter the cry which had given the cooky-boy the impression that a debble was in the chest, and so started the trouble on the Dawn.

"You've got me!" said Dandy Peter, between his teeth. "A few more hours—"

"And then?" asked King of the Islands.

"Guess!" snarled Dandy Peter.  
"I think I can guess," said the boy trader, in the same quiet tone. "You packed yourself in that chest, tricked Harvey into landing it on us with a lie about sending sandalwood carvings to Suta, and waited for night. When Hudson came down to the cabin you

(Continued on page 14)



## MARKED MAN (Continued)

click, but no light. Simultaneously he heard a swift but stealthy movement.

Because of the sinister forces which constantly menaced him, Scotty's nerves were as taut and alert as those of any animal of the wild which depends for its life on its quickness. At the first sound of that stealthy movement he hurled himself aside.

But he was the fraction of a second too late. White-hot, searing agony drove down through his arm, and in the blackness someone blundered heavily forward, carried onwards by the impetus of the savage, stabbing blow aimed at the airman's back.

Whirling, Scotty closed with his assailant in the darkness. He whipped his leg behind the man's knees and hurled his whole weight upon him.

The man went down with a crash, with Scotty on top of him. Smashing his fist to the fellow's face, inches only from his own in the darkness, Scotty groped frantically for the man's arm, for he knew he was armed.

His fingers closed on cold steel—the naked blade of a bayonet. Driving his knee into the stomach of his viciously struggling assailant, Scotty whipped his other hand down, fighting desperately to gain possession of the bayonet.

But the fellow was fighting like a madman, his gasping breath hot on Scotty's face as the pair of them threshed frenziedly about the floor in the darkness. Realising that he could no longer use the bayonet with any good effect, and that it was merely impeding his struggles, the man suddenly released his grip on it and smashed his fist to Scotty's face.

The blow took the airman full on the mouth, bursting his lips and sending his head back with a jerk. Before he could recover, his assailant hurled him from him, then, blundering to his feet, dashed out of the door.

Scrambling up, Scotty leapt in pursuit. But the fellow had vanished, swallowed up in the inky blackness of the night.

Pursuit was useless. Scotty knew that full well, for by the time he had raised the alarm his assailant might be anywhere, still fleeing madly through the darkness.

Leaning against the side of the doorway, panting for breath, the bayonet still in his hand, Scotty drew out his handkerchief and dabbed at his bleeding lips.

It had been a precious close call for him, and he knew it. But for his swiftness he would have suffered the same death as Parkin.

Long moments passed whilst Scotty leant motionless there in the doorway, his face pale and set in the darkness. He could feel the blood from his wounded arm wet and sticky on the sleeve of his tunic, but still he did not stir.

Was the man who had attacked him a member of the aerodrome personnel or an outsider who had crept on to the aerodrome under cover of darkness and secreted himself in the hut? If the latter, then by this time the rascal would be well away, and a search for him would be worse than useless. But if the former—

Scotty tensed, struck by a sudden thought. Then abruptly he straightened up, and, entering the hut, closed the door. Taking his

## THE CHEST OF TERROR

(Continued)

had got out of the chest, and, but for his running into you, you intended to scuttle my ship. And you tried it on again, when I saw your shadow, and came down. And again you scuttled back into the chest in the dark like a scuttling rat."

"You've got it!" sneered the sea-lawyer. "Given time, I'd have made you pay for that thrashing you gave me. I had it all out and dried to scuttle your packet. I reckoned I'd get away in the boat; but I'd have chanced it with a lifebelt to pay what I owed you. Now you've got me, what are you going to do?" He gave a sneering laugh. "The law won't help you much. Are you going to charge me with stowing myself away on your ketch, and stealing a passage to Suta?"

Modern Boy

matches from his pocket, he struck one. By the faint illumination he saw that the electric light bulb had been removed from its socket and was lying on his camp-bed.

Fixing the bulb back into its socket, he locked the door and stripped off his tunic. The wound in his arm, although deep, was a flesh wound only, and not serious if properly looked after. He bathed and bandaged it as best he could with a couple of clean handkerchiefs. Then, undressing, he switched out the light and turned in.

That there would be no further attack on him that night, he was pretty certain. But he lay long awake, staring up into the darkness, before he eventually drifted off into restless slumber.

He was astir with the dawn. Fully dressed, he walked through the greying light of early morning to the hut which served as a guard-room.

Sergeant Crayshaw, in charge of the guard, came to the salute at sight of Scotty. That he was surprised at this early visit was evident, and his eyes took curious stock of his commander's pale, set face and bruised lips.

"Anything to report, Crayshaw?" asked Scotty. "Anything happened during the night?"

"No, sir, nothing," answered the sergeant. "Everything has been quiet."

"You have had twelve sentries on duty all told at the hangars, ammunition dump, and petrol dump?" said Scotty.

"Yes, sir," assented the sergeant.

"Very well. Parade them now—the whole lot of them," said Scotty. "I want to inspect them."

Greatly wondering, Sergeant Crayshaw departed to summon the guards, who were picked men specially supplied by headquarters. A few minutes later the twelve of them were drawn up in two ranks in front of the guard-room, and Scotty walked slowly along both ranks, scanning each man closely. Then, stepping back, he said:

"I understand that everything was quiet during the night? None of you has the slightest incident to report?"

"No, sir," answered the guards.

"Very good!" said Scotty. "I am now going to have the reveille sounded, and every officer and man on the aerodrome paraded for roll-call. Sergeant Crayshaw will station you around the huts and living quarters. You will allow no one, neither officer nor man, to leave the aerodrome. Should anyone attempt to leave, you will stop him. If necessary, you will open fire, but do not shoot to kill if you can avoid it. But under no circumstances must anyone be allowed to leave the aerodrome! Is that quite clear?"

"Yes, sir!" answered the guards.

"Very good!" said Scotty; and, turning to Sergeant Crayshaw, he ordered him to place the guards around the huts and living quarters, then to have the reveille sounded, and officers and men paraded for roll-call.

A prey to a deeper wonderment than ever, Sergeant Crayshaw carried out the orders, and some twenty minutes later every officer and man on the aerodrome was drawn up on parade.

"What's the idea of this roll-call, sir?"

"No," said King of the Islands. "If you had succeeded, you scoundrel, the law couldn't have helped; and now you've failed, it cannot give you what you deserve. I'm going to give you the biggest thrashing you ever had in your life! Stand up to it, you scoundrel!"

"Leave him to me!" said Hudson.

"You're damaged, old man; I'm not. I'm going to handle him. Are you ready, Peter Parsons?"

"Ready and willing!" retorted the sea-lawyer.

There was a buzz of excitement from the Hiva-Oa boys as they gathered round to watch what followed.

"Debbles," and the fear of debbles, had vanished from their minds now. The trouble between captain and crew was over and done with. The Kanakas, in fact, were already forgetting it. They watched eagerly as King of the Islands and the sea-lawyer of Lukve

asked Captain Benson, who had joined Scotty.

"I'll tell you later," said Scotty grimly. He waited in silence whilst Sergeant Crayshaw called the roll. Turning to him, the sergeant saluted, and said:

"All present and correct, sir."

"Not a man missing?" demanded Scotty.

"No, sir. Every officer and man is present," replied the sergeant.

"Very good; come with me!" said Scotty. And, followed by the sergeant and adjutant, he commenced to move slowly along the ranks, studying each man's face intently. Suddenly he halted in front of a man, the left side of whose face was bruised and discoloured.

"What is your name?" rapped Scotty.

"Murdoch, sir," answered the man, staring at Scotty with something akin to fear and defiance in his eyes.

"He's my batman, sir," put in Captain Benson quickly. "Is anything wrong?"

"I want to know how he got those bruises on his face," said Scotty curtly. Then to Murdoch: "How did it happen?"

"I was off duty last night, sir," said the man quickly. "I went into Le Couray village. There's some American troops there, sir, and I got into an argument which ended in a fight. That's how I got these bruises, sir."

"Very well. I will have your story investigated!" rapped Scotty. "In the meantime, you are under arrest! Sergeant Crayshaw, call an escort, and have this man taken to the guard-room!"

After Murdoch had been removed, Scotty carried on with his inspection. Then, dismissing the parade, he walked towards the flight office, with the vastly curious Captain Benson.

"The reason I've had your batman arrested is this," said Scotty. "Last night, after I left you, and went to my hut, someone tried to stab me. There was a struggle, and the fellow got away, but not before I'd marked him with my fists. I didn't raise the alarm, for two reasons. One was that if the fellow happened to be some outsider who'd crept on to the aerodrome, he'd be well away before a hue-and-cry could be started. The other was that if he happened to be a member of the personnel, and I started a hut to hut search, the chances were that he'd get the wind-up, and slip away in the darkness. So I lay low, and pounced with this dawn parade—a move he didn't anticipate."

"But, look here, sir!" burst out the adjutant. "You surely don't seriously think that Murdoch was the man who attacked you? Why, I've had him ever since I came out from England, and always found him trustworthy. I quite believe his story about having a scrap with those Yanks—"

"Well, I don't; not until it's been proved!" cut in Scotty bluntly. "Things have got to such a state on this aerodrome, Benson, that I'm trusting nobody, and if you want to know what I think, I'm convinced that in Murdoch I've got the man who attacked me!"

Next Week :  
ESCORT FOR BOMBERS

faced one another on the after-deck, in the bright light of the moon.

Dandy Peter did not shrink from it. Scoundrel as the sea-lawyer was, he had plenty of courage. He stood up to the fight with savage determination, facing hard punishment with desperate hardihood. Again and again the sea-lawyer went down, till at length he lay on the deck, knocked out.

He had to be taken from a bunk and helped ashore when the Dawn made Suta. He had not yet recovered from that terrible thrashing. When the ketch pulled out to sea again, he watched it go with blackened eyes. If he still nourished thoughts of revenge, he was not thinking of laying further schemes—the outcome of the last had been too disastrous for that!

Next Week :  
ISLAND OF THE WOLF